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## **REFLECTIONS ON SPACE, STRUCTURE AND THEIR IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS**

**Abstract:** Commitment to rationality stands equally at the core of modernity and its defining institution, modern organisations. In this paper we consider the relation between rationality and space, focusing on 'strategy'. We connect these relations to a Cartesian heritage, one that we see as a recurrent theme of Western management thought. However, just as importantly, there have been attempts to think outside this Cartesian heritage, the most significant of which, for our project, we take to be Kafka. From Kafka we derive support for the idea that management, as an ordering device, is a congenitally failing operation. In the construction of order, strategy does not simply form structure, as Chandler argues, but the structure of the strategy-making process enables and limits strategy as its product. Management does not determine organisation but the organisation of managerial tasks as precondition frames the space in which questions – such as who defines strengths and weaknesses, where one seeks opportunities and threats, who defines possible futures and future possibilities – first occur, shifting between mind and matter, management and organisation, strategy and structure, and function and form. Instead of privileging one term over the other, as Cartesian rationality does, they become equally important, depending equally on each other. To further this interdependence we suggest that management and organisation theory should engage in a dialogue with architecture, an orientation to which we elaborate in the paper.

**Key words:** space organisation, space management.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION: SPACE AND ORGANISATIONS

The 'object' of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space* ... 'Change life!' 'Change society!' These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space ... new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 37, 59).

At its inception, the sociology of organisations was concerned with the creation of a new world of modernity. It was a world of rationalised institutional spaces governed by calculation: of law as a space in which bourgeois and liberal rights could be enacted; of the state as a space of rational administration; of the economy as a rational market in which the exchange of formally free labour and capital could occur; of money as a circulatory media and free-floating signifier that could travel through all spaces. Weber (1978) saw these as part of the strategic space created, somewhat unanticipatedly, by modernity. Within these spaces would develop new men and women: rational calculators focused on rationality as the core of their being.

The Protestant, of course, was the archetype for these new men and women (Weber, 1976). Having spawned the meaning of being in this world as a vocation fit for religious virtuosi, their fate was to see its religiosity cast aside, lightly as a cloak, by those who came to inherit the space. Now it is sensualists without spirit, strategists without convictions, players without soul, which inhabit this space. No longer content to inherit the happy accidents of their forebears they seek to design and plan the space they occupy through the one thing that flowed uninterruptedly from then to now – their rationality. If commitment to an ethos of salvation defined the nature of Being for the committed Protestant, for the moderns who inherited the world that they made, to be is to be rational. The world is to be designed, built, redesigned and redeveloped along rational lines. Modernity is a world of rational spaces: rational people in rational organisations, situated in rational urbanity. What defines premodernity, increasingly, is precisely this lack of rationality: the bazaar, with its dense labyrinths, irrational haggling, and absence of the rule of rational legality. Rationality produces rational beings in rational spaces and remakes what, from its perspective, can only ever be seen as preceding it.

While this emphasis on rationality as a series of institutionally defined social spaces is implicit in Weber, it was the next great German heir to the tradition of Nietzsche, Heidegger, who conceptualised being as a fundamental spatial phenomenon. 'Dasein' as 'being-in-the-world' unfolds in space and thus being means always being in something. Taking the increasing institutionalisation of our world, one could argue that a contemporary reading of Heidegger on being as 'being-in-a-world' could translate it into being as 'being-in-an-organised-world'.

In fact, as Burrell (1988, p. 232) noted, 'whilst we may not live in total institutions, the institutional organisation of our lives is total'. Thus, we argue that understanding ourselves (individual level) and the world that surrounds us (organisational level) requires an understanding of the spaces in which these two phenomena are inextricably organised – and sometimes dis/organised – in relation to each other (Cooper, 1990). This concern expresses a deeper and wider experience that confronts contemporary society:

We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own. ... In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, not with time (Foucault, 1998, pp. 23, 26).

Architecturally, Hillier and Hanson (1984, pp. ix, 2) address this point in the following terms:

By giving shape and form to our material world, architecture structures the system of space in which we live and move. In that it does so, it has a direct relation – rather than a merely symbolic one – to social life, since it provides the material preconditions for the patterns of movement, encounter and avoidance which are the material realization – as well as sometimes the generator – of social relations. ... The ordering of space in buildings is really about the ordering of relations between people.

Bringing together sociologically informed organisation theory, architectural thinking and critical philosophical reflection thus constitutes an important agenda for the understanding of contemporary social spaces as organisations, institutionally framed, and architecturally housed. Grosz (2001, p. xvi) informs the philosophical and architectural aspects of such an agenda in the following:

To explore architecture philosophically would entail submitting architectural design, construction and theory to the requirements and exigencies of philosophical discourse, the rigour of philosophical argument, and the abstraction of philosophical speculation. And to examine philosophy architecturally would require using philosophical concepts and propositions, wrenched from their own theoretical context and transformed, perhaps mutilated, for architectural purposes.

In this paper we will extend such an analysis to the major exemplification of the spirit of rationality in management and organisation theory – strategy – that space in which both scholars and practitioners converge. We address strategy precisely because it is the most explicit heir to the concern for being that underlay the sociological classics of Weber and the philosophical classics of Heidegger. Where else, other than in the discourse of strategy, will one find the new men and women being made up for the new millennium? Strategic management seeks to design organisations, their structures and processes as well as those who will inhabit them: it 'makes up' managers (du Gay, 1994).

After briefly delineating the development of strategy we will rethink its basic assumptions and challenge them philosophically, arguing for a more spatially orientated understanding of strategic management in particular and processes unfolding in organisations in general.

## 2. MANAGEMENT'S CONTEMPORARY OBSESSION WITH STRATEGY

Management strategises almost everything: HRM, planning, marketing, R&D, to ensure that the future is taken into account, thus showing that one's organisation is being rational and in control (Mintzberg, 1994, pp. 16–19). Generally speaking, strategy is perceived as a set of rational techniques for managing complex business in a changing environment. Strategy is a plan that unifies an organisation's major goals into one cohesive whole. It marshals and allocates an organisation's resources in order to reach its goal (Quinn, 1998, p. 3). Strategies are plans that 'are made in advance of actions to which they apply, and they are developed consciously and purposefully' (Mintzberg, 1998, p. 10). Most decisive is to have a clear and unambiguous goal that directs action and 'provides continuity and cohesion for tactical choices during the time horizon of the strategy' (Quinn, 1998, p. 9). Once a clear strategy is formulated, the second step is to implement and realise the plan (Andrews, 1998, pp. 48–49). Philosophically, it is a Cartesian inspired rationality that informs this thinking (Descartes, 1642). The split between mind (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*) is reflected in the gap between management and organisation: while the former analyses, controls, leads, thinks and plans, the latter appears as a mere inert and passive object that has to be directed. Management as the 'head' creates strategies in order to dominate and lead the organisation (the 'body')

I think, therefore I am: Management strategises, therefore the organisation is ... and will be ...

Notice the peculiar Cartesian transliteration of corporeality and being in modern management: while 'I' might think and be, in a unity of being and corporeality, it is management that does the thinking in order that organisation might be, now and in the future. The unity is necessarily broken. The conditions of existence of the corporate body are contingent on the prior existence of the corporate mind. Strategy is mental labour par excellence; without it, the laborious body could not even come into being.

The distinction between corporeal identity and the privileges of being is well – known in general management – it emerges with Taylor (1947) but is

preserved at the core of far more contemporary discourse. For instance, in more recent management and organisation theory, this domination of mind over matter, of head over body, was established explicitly by Chandler's (1962) theory of structure following strategy. Chandler's analyses raised a new conceptual object – the strategic plan – that drives, dominates and determines organisational structure. Structure follows strategy and strategy is driven by environmental changes. The chain of cause and effect is linear, simple and trivial, but, nonetheless, decisive: 'Unless structure follows strategy, inefficiency rules' (Chandler 1962, p. 314).

Chandler's analyses became the start of a rapidly increasing, now immense, interest in strategy and strategic planning. Organisational strategy became the most important tasks for corporations: strategy 'is what makes a firm unique, a winner, or a survivor' (Thomas, 1993, p. 3). Mintzberg (1989, p. 29) summarised the basic and mostly unchallenged assumption behind the strategy discourse as follows:

Virtually everything that has been written about strategy-making depicts it as a deliberate process. First we think, and then we act. We formulate, then we implement. The progression seems so perfectly sensible.

### 3. CARTESIAN PROBLEMS

The problem of strategic planning lies first in the tacit underlying distinction between formulation and implementation; management and organisation; mind and matter; strategy and structure; form and function – in short the Cartesian origins. The former term dominates the latter, trying to eliminate its influence but, precisely in this attempt, it serves to reproduce the other. Endless dialectics are reproduced and reinforced through the discourses of strategy-making between mind and matter, planning and implementing, managing and organising, even where they find their justification in pretending to overcome it. Paradoxically, the more they try to bridge the gap the more they actively create, widen and deepen it. Strategic planning also relies heavily on a process, hence time-based view, which is also implicitly influenced by Descartes. It focuses on events unfolding in time, trying to anticipate or direct them in their more or less linear emergence. Rereading Descartes famous *Discourse on Methods* might tell us more about the fallacies of strategy than assumed. For Descartes, the presence of the new is premised upon the destruction of the old. He suggests erasing the old and starting anew, as he, sitting alone in his stove-heated room, tells us. Note the spatial metaphor informing his thought:

One of the first things I thought it well to consider was that as a rule there is not such great perfection in works composed of several parts, and proceeding from the hands of various artists, as in those on which one man has worked alone. Thus we see buildings undertaken and carried out by a single architect are generally more seemly and better arranged than those that several hands have sought to adapt, making use of old walls that were built for other purposes. Again, those ancient cities which were originally mere boroughs, and have become large towns in process of time, are as a rule badly laid out, as compared with those towns of regular pattern that are laid out by a designer on an open plain to suit his fancy; while the buildings severally considered are often equal or superior artistically to those in planned towns, yet, in view of their arrangement – here a large one, there a small – and the way they make the streets twisted and irregular, one would say that it was chance that placed them so, not the will of men who had the use of reason (Descartes, 1637, p. 15).

True to its Cartesian roots, strategy treats space as a manipulable object, as a mere container that can be changed intentionally. Instead of building on what many hands built in the past strategy radically destroys the past in the name of an utopian future – but strategies are highly unlikely to deliver what they promise – a stable and secure path leading towards a golden future. Strategy can only be created according to current problems and the solutions management currently imagines. As long as organisations only have to cope with a trivial world, that is fine. As soon as things become more complex, the simple one-way relation between problem and solution shifts. Solutions for non-trivial problems lead, when isolated from their original context, to a transformation; regarded from the outside (the preferred manager's view), a strategy may be right; implemented in the organisational context, it turns out to be wrong, because 'actions affect the preferences in the name of which they are taken; and the discovery of new intentions is a common consequence of intentional behaviour' (March, 1981, p. 176). The plan, therefore, creates a complexity, which cannot be controlled by new plans: following the fatal logic of 'do as before, but more' (Hedberg, Nystrom and Starbuck, 1976, p. 50) the plan merely creates more of the disorder that it promised to master. Thus, any plan realises first and foremost the problems of implementation, the process of translation from the strategic vision to the concrete forms. Planners 'assume that policy goals and directives are (or can be) clear, that policy makers know what they want, and that what they want is consistent, stable and unambiguous' (Baier, March and Saetren, 1988, p. 157) but such a view ignores what we know about planning – it defers the problem from a clear, rational process of planning (March, 1971) into the realm of the unclear, unstable organisation. Strategists and planners who deny the complexity of the world outside are surprised when they find it waiting to subvert and resist the ready-made plan. Plans are not clear-cut papers waiting to be executed – they promote organisational contradiction, they mirror changing preferences over time, as a result of organisational power-games (Clegg, 1989). They are, reduced to a formula, always ambiguous (Baier, March and Saetren, 1986).

Strategy assumes the human mind to be omnipotent: change happens in the mind, it needs to be planned – the big task – and then *merely* implemented. Organisational space is conceived as a mere object passively awaiting transformation. Reflecting this urge for order and control, the Cartesian split between a mind that is ‘unshakably certain’ (Descartes, 1642, p. 66) as it guarantees truth, and a shifting and deceptive world of inert and homogeneous mass, is repeated and echoed in dominant strategic thinking. Taking as its cue the notion that mind controls matter, management seeks to control the organisation; the plan determines reality, or, translated into a more contemporary language, strategy determines structure, form follows function. In this concept, obviously one term dominates the other and imposes an hierarchical relation; in fact, it constitutes a system of divisions and gaps that constantly undermine, subvert or, spoken with a more fashionable language, deconstruct, efforts to impose order on the organisation. As Porter (1996, p. 77) says, it is management’s task to:

... provide the discipline to decide which industry changes and customer needs the company will respond to, while avoiding organisational distractions and maintaining the company’s distinctiveness. Managers at lower levels lack the perspective and the confidence to maintain a strategy ... One of the leader’s job is to teach others in the organisation about strategy – and to say no.

Therein we can see Taylor’s old prejudices reformulated strategically: a few enlightened and happy managers direct the mass of an organisation’s employees who are too easily lead astray, too weak and thus have to be taught by the leaders.

Closely related to this point, we argue that the strategy process creates a system of dualism in which one term logically and empirically needs and refers to the other without being able to comprehend the complexities of this dynamic. We can elaborate this critique by referring to the age-old dualism between mind and body, that informs Western thinking generally and management theory especially (Dale, 2001). Ironically, one could argue that Taylor’s division between a planning and analysing mind on the one hand, and mere executing hands on the other, gave rise to the body of literature one confronts as ‘strategy’: once this division of labour is imposed, management has to find answers to questions such as how to motivate people. (a problem developing from HR to HRM, without noticing its home-made origin); how to get the knowledge out of the worker’s head and simultaneously encourage the employees to learn and enhance knowledge, a problem that cumulated in the uncountable metres of bookshelves dealing with organisational learning, knowledge management and so forth. And, finally, management has to be concerned with employee commitment and engagement, reflected in a whole range of streams discussing organisational culture and identity.

Planning in general, and strategy especially, impose stability on an organisation. Instability is understood as a lack of strategy, as a lack of future direction. But the fact of having and disseminating a strategy, and especially of making it explicit, as managers are supposed to do, creates resistance to change: strategy defines a reality that can, surprisingly quickly, become a trap for an organisation's future development. The planner's preoccupation with order, stability and predictability reflects the fact that many strategic plans are usually trivial, only calculating foreseeable events and predictable developments. As we emphasised before, in fast changing environments, the task of anticipating the future becomes more and more illusory. Thus, the plan loses its importance as a trivial means of orientation and transforms into a means of trivialising reality: it produces 'predictable worlds', it constructs what it pretends to mirror (Kallinikos, 1996; Tsivacou, 1996). Strategic planning is a way of world making, unfortunately a way that only takes into account that which can be made simple and trivial.

This spirit is reflected in functional management thinking (Taylor) but it also finds its expression in modern architectural thinking, as Le Corbusier (1923, p. 23) writes:

Order is indispensable to him [*sic*], otherwise his actions would be without coherence and could lead nowhere. And to it he brings the aid of his perfection. The more this order is an exact one, the more happy he is, the more secure he feels. In his mind he sets up the framework of constructions based on the order which is imposed upon him by his body, and so he creates. All the work man has achieved is an 'ordering' ... As we move higher in the scale of creation, so we move towards a more perfect order.

Kafka, that master writer of spatial puzzles and explorer of the irrationality of rationality, helps us understand the shortcoming of the Cartesian project as an attempt to secularise almighty power in the order created by an omnipotent subject. Such omnipotence is also increasingly challenged within the discourse that so often seems dedicated to a Kafka without irony – organisation theory – at least by more critical organisational theorists, such as Weick (1979, p. 189), who says:

...the inability of people in organizations to tolerate equivocal processing may well be one of the most important reasons why they have trouble ... It is the unwillingness to disrupt order, ironically, that makes it impossible for the organization to create order.

Kafka's take on this same paradox was expressed in his account of the non-construction of the Tower of Babel. Following Kafka's interpretation, the reason the Tower proved impossible to erect was not because of the actions of an almighty being, observing the human effort carefully from above, but rather it was the case that the very idea of erecting a Tower was one which undermined itself constantly in its attempted accomplishment, dooming the effort to failure:



At first all the arrangements for building the Tower of Babel were characterized by fairly good order; indeed the order was perhaps *too perfect* ... In fact the general opinion at that time was that one simply could not build too slowly; a very little insistence on this would have sufficed to make one hesitate to lay the foundations at all. People argued in this way: The essential thing in the whole business is the *idea* of building a tower that will reach to heaven. In comparison with that idea everything else is secondary. The idea, once seized in its magnitude, can never vanish again; so long as there are men on the earth there will be also the irresistible desire to complete the building. That being so, however, one need have no anxiety about the future: on the contrary, *human knowledge is increasing*, the art of building has made progress and will make further progress, *a piece of work which takes us a year may perhaps be done in half the time in another hundred years, and better done, too, more enduringly*. So why exert oneself to the extreme limit of one's present powers? There would be some sense in doing that only if it were likely that the tower could be completed in one generation. But that is beyond all hope. *It is far more likely that the next generation with their perfected knowledge will find the work of their predecessors bad, and tear down what has been built so as to begin anew* (Kafka, 1970, p. 141; emphasis added).

Translated into our context, we can understand Kafka's rereading in the following way: being possessed by a dominant idea, driven by a dominant goal, during the realisation of this idea we start by building a foundation for our enterprise: our knowledge increases and, as it does so, we are, after a while, forced to tear down this foundation, because now we are able to build a better and more enduring one. *The knowledge we gain through realising our idea forces us to deconstruct the foundation again and again*. As Kafka's story concludes, building the Tower of Babel never started because of the paralysis of ideas. The idea of erecting one common Tower, persuading all of one common goal, or all speaking one common language leads inevitably into paradox: it subverts and undermines itself incessantly. It is not insufficient order – the functionalist analysis – or the lack of an overall Leviathan (which was how Hobbes [1651] saw things, opting for a secularisation of the Divine in the body of the King in a way that has been many a management's goal ever since), which is responsible for the Babel-like condition we are living in, but a too perfect order. All those well-known managerial tools that try to increase order, especially those that project the Leviathan-like authority of the corporeal managerial host that incorporates the bodies and souls of those subordinates that owe liege in order to minimise the apparent chaos of Babel, in fact, produce this disorder constantly. Management as an ordering device is therefore a congenitally failing operation.

Generally speaking:

The 'Tower of Babel' does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalising, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics (Derrida, 1995, p. 165).

#### 4. MANAGING BEYOND STRATEGY

Rather than privileging senior executives as strategists, we argue that their task is to provide other organisation members with space, resources and time that enable them to develop a strategy. In short, we suggest that managers should provide and focus on the structure from which strategies can emerge according to the unpredictability of events. Chandler (1962, p. 14) sees lines, flows and streams of information, power, voices, and knowledge all determining the frame in which strategies first emerge. They are the precondition for the possibility of any strategy. Consequently, management focuses on the process of strategy formation,

... concerning itself with the *design of the structure*, with staffing, development of procedures, and so on – while leaving the actual content to others (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 34; emphasis added).

For management, efficient strategy-making becomes a task of structuring and designing the organisation in such a way that members can create strategies. As we shall see, the flow of communication transgressing boundaries between organisational subdivisions becomes crucial knowledge and information necessary for strategy-making.

Strategy as a result of a process will reflect the conditions of its coming into being (Hamel, 1996). Creative strategy-making, for instance, is not about planning and programming but about discovering and utilising March's (1971) 'technology of foolishness', where strangers – that is, people from the boundaries of an organisation, young people, newcomers, put simply, people with different insights and perspectives – must be involved in the process of strategy-making. All these important steps in the process of strategy-making are a question of the structure of the process. If the structure of an organisation does not enable or encourage different voices to be heard, strategy will reflect only top management's prejudices and biases. Mintzberg (1989) has called this phenomenon 'grass-root strategy-making' (Hamel, 1996, likewise speaks of 'democratic strategy-making') that lead to 'emergent strategies'. How can management encourage and enhance strategy making throughout the entire organisation?

We suggest that strategic management should become a matter of structuring. In fact, management's task is providing structures from which strategies can first emerge. Management happens on the backstage, it is first and foremost the task of creating the precondition for possibilities to come into existence. There are things that vanish as soon as one addresses them straightforwardly. Creativity and innovation are such things. Attempting to produce them intentionally is the surest and fastest way of expelling them.

Wittgenstein once said that a temple is supposed to provide a setting for feelings and passion without interfering with them. Similarly, it is management's task to provide a setting for innovation and creativity without interfering with them directly. An organisation might experience less (management) as more (freedom).

Strategy does not simply (in)form structure, as Chandler argued, but the structure of the strategy-making process enables and limits the strategy as its product (cf. Harris and Ruefli, 2000). Management does not determine organisation but the organisation of managerial tasks as precondition frames the space in which questions – such as who defines strengths and weaknesses, where one seeks opportunities and threats, who defines possible futures and future possibilities – first occur, shifting between mind and matter, management and organisation, strategy and structure, and function and form. Instead of privileging one term over the other, as Cartesian rationality does, they become equally important, depending equally on each other.

New and creative strategies may not be found intentionally but emerge at the margins, within the grey zones, in the gaps and divisions. Thus, management's task might no longer consist of formulating a strategy and then struggling with the notorious problems of implementing it. Rather, it might provide the space for different voices to be heard and resources for experiments where no one knows exactly where they might lead. Certainly management has to stop defining right and wrong ways; its major task will be encouraging and enhancing the entire organisation to think, and finally act, strategically. As we shall argue on the next pages, this happens through managing organisational *space*. Space management implies a shift from the dominant managerial obsession with time and process to a view that emphasises an organisation's materiality. It leads to a change from the domination of mind over matter to a consideration of the material body as a precondition of apparently purely mental events as thinking or strategising.

## 5. MANAGING SPACE

Strategic planning is too often a calendar-driven ritual when it could be 'an exploration of the potential for revolution'. Strategy does not have to fit into the existing boundaries; rather it is the question how 'to invent new, uncontested competitive space' (Hamel, 1996, p. 70) and how to eradicate old boundaries and where to establish new differences that really make a difference. Boundaries, of course, are first and foremost a question of space, of the concrete

spatial arrangement that constitutes an organisation. Therefore, we suggest that management's task consists in managing space as a means of enhancing organisational communication (the precondition of organisational learning, creativity etc.) rather than developing sophisticated strategies in closed boardrooms that only reproduce the fallacies that might circulate there.

Practically, the process of strategy finding and making becomes the task of the entire organisation: it must be 'democratic'. Managers at the top of the organisational pyramid may well be able to lay claim to impressive credentials – the glittering careers – possessing, perhaps, the most elite MBAs. Unfortunately, such credentials, based on analysis of what was, are valuable

... only to the extent that the future is like the past. In industry after industry, the terrain is changing so fast that experience is becoming irrelevant and even dangerous (Hamel, 1996, p. 74).

We would argue, therefore, that strategy-making must be a process that emerges from the entire organisation. As we have seen in Kafka's reading of the Tower of Babel, projects driven by a unifying, homogenising and directing strategy seem condemned to fail: not because of shortcomings in their realisation but because of their own, inherent rationality. Strategic projects fail because they implicitly evoke the forces that deconstruct their own fundamentals incessantly.

By contrast, what we are calling for, in other words, is a polyphonic organisation, which is notable for its capacity to allow many voices to speak – not just those upper middle classes who usually run things, even today. A polyphone organisation is capable of developing alternative and unique perspectives that might turn out to be revolutionary. It is a means of avoiding that tendency described by Hamel (1996, p. 76) as 'intellectual incest among top managers', whereby top management are so inculcated within the same *habitus*, where they are in harmony with each another to such an extent that they are able to finish each other's sentences – even if they do not agree with the sentiments expressed in them – people for whom nothing about the other can be a surprise any more. In terms of strategy-making, we would argue for letting the strangers and outsiders speak, listening to the voices from those spaces at the edge of the organisation's geographic periphery, those at the intellectual margins, newcomers that have yet to be vaccinated by the organisation's orthodoxy. So let different voices speak – allowing the extant hierarchy of experience to be supplemented with a hierarchy of ideas, illusions and dreams (see Hamel, 1996, pp. 75, 76, 81, 82).

Tom Peters (1992, p. 413) has recently called space management

...the most ignored – and most powerful – tool for inducing culture change, speeding up innovation projects, and enhancing the learning process in far-flung organisations. While we fret

ceaselessly about facilities issues such as office square footage allotted to various ranks, we all but ignore the key strategic issue – the parameters of intermingling.

Architects like Hillier (1996, p. 373) have stressed that while an 'organisation can be described without reference to space, and therefore without reference to buildings ... the way in which the organization works usually cannot'. We argue, in other words, that there is a strong link between space and management that can be understood as the precondition of organisational processes unfolding in time. As Hillier and Hanson (1984, p. 2) put it, the 'ordering of space in buildings is really about the ordering of relations between people'. Space generates social relations (through communication, informal networks etc.): these are the necessary precondition of successful strategy-making. Revolutionary strategies, as Hamel shows, are the key to success and they can only be produced when the entire organisation is involved, not just top managers. Space management is one means to provide the setting from where such revolutionary strategies can first emerge.

Ironically, it was, Le Corbusier (1923, pp. 8, 265), one of the godfathers of modern architecture, who was perfectly aware of the potential of marrying architecture and the management of space, reflecting on the danger that lies in architecture, when he wrote that

... It is a question of building which is at the root of the social unrest of to-day ... The balance of society comes down to a question of building. We conclude with these justifiable remarks: *Architecture or revolution.*

Interpreting Le Corbusier we argue that architecture exists not in opposition to revolutionary strategies but is the precondition of their coming into being. Thus, space and its forms give birth to surprisingly new and innovative strategies. Managing organisations would thus mean managing spatial structure as something that might, for better or worse, inculcate revolutionary strategies.

As we have emphasised, standard conceptions of strategic management are highly likely to lead the entire organisation astray rather than ensure its successful development. We do not intend to suggest that managers should simply be fired (if they had taken Peters literally and really honed their Maoist tendencies this could be potentially dangerous – imagine all these managers whose imagination had been formed through learning the slogans from Peters' manifesto's, all those 'surfers on the edge' and seekers after 'liberation through chaos', marching as an army of unemployed through the streets – worthy rivals for the ranks of the Red Brigade who might, just, pale into insignificance by contrast). We suggest that the task of managers consists of creating space that enables and encourages the entire organisation's members to engage in the process of strategy-making.

Thus, we suggest that management and organisation theory should engage in a dialogue with architecture. According to the architect Koolhaas (1995, p. 1204) architecture operates within the context of a new urbanism that does not concern buildings that define and confine an identity but buildings 'that create and trigger potential'. Architecture can generate complexity; it can produce possibilities as well as limit, hinder and decrease the unfolding of events. Thus, space is inextricably linked to power: it limits and enables, it creates and hinders through precise spatial arrangements. If management wants to increase innovative and creative strategies, it has to create different spaces – a generative building (Hanson and Hillier, 1984) that allows and encourages plurality, contradictions and dissensus through its spatial organisation.

Drawing the consequences of the thoughts developed above we suggest a notion of space management that supplements existing strategic management approaches. Space management focuses on the spatial preconditions of strategy-making, on the materiality that the Cartesian aspirations excluded so successfully. Managing space, and thus providing a structure from which strategies can emerge, means creating a space where problems can occur. Doing this one is not driven by the functionalist belief that form follows function. Rather, one explores the potential of alternative forms that give rise to new problems and questions. Following Koolhaas (1995, p. 603) we could term this strategy the 'strategy of the void':

*Imagine a building consisting of regular and irregular spaces, where the most important parts of the building consist of an absence of building.*

Such spaces are capable of transforming themselves while being (ab)used and occupied by different people only temporarily. They provide the spatial structure where people find the space to think, talk and act strategically.

Strategy of the void would seek to produce margins where things are loosely coupled so that they can act, react and interact flexibly:

Flexibility is not the exhaustive anticipation of all possible changes. Most changes are unpredictable ... Flexibility is the creation of margin – excess capacity that enables different and even opposite interpretations and uses ... New architecture, lacking this kind of excess, is doomed to a permanent state of alteration, if it is to adjust even minor ideological or practical changes (Koolhaas, 1995, p. 240).

The flexibility that Koolhaas attributes to buildings is equally strong required by organisations that are confronted with a fast changing world. Rather than engaging in a Cartesian style in another Tower of Babel project, where strategic thought is everything, flexibility is based on the embracement of the constant de- and reconstruction Kafka suggested.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As Hillier (1996) says, space is the machine that provides a setting, a concrete spatial arrangement wherein innovation and creativity can first emerge. As the basic precondition of strategy-making it provides the stage where people can interact freely and enact their ideas creatively. Space management organises the flows of communication, knowledge and movement and at the intersections where they coincide and intermingle there emerges surprisingly what cannot be managed intentionally but enhanced actively through a generative spatial organisation – excellence.

In conclusion, we want to highlight the consequences of our analysis for power and language – two issues that crucially influence strategy-making. Management, as we conceive it, works on power relations in order to create knowledgeable learning organisations. As Foucault has shown, power and knowledge are inextricable interlinked. Thus, creating knowledge that leads to superior strategies implies necessarily a shift in organisational power relation. Managing space always means managing power relations: it is one way of constructing knowledge that might lead to innovation and creativity. Of course, power that attempts to control everything and everyone is the enemy of strategy making. Therefore, space management must seek to produce a liberating effect (see the papers collected in Davidson, 2001). Instead of joining the dominant obsession with order and control, space management would increase spatial variety and plurality. Management that focuses on space and thinks architecturally would represent a political act, not reflecting merely a search for intentional strategies but for a disturbance of established structures that, consciously or not, plicitly direct action. Such an architectural thinking would be

... not unlike burning matches without a purpose. This produces an intense pleasure that cannot be bought or sold. Such totally gratuitous consumption of architecture is ironically *political* in that it disturbs established structures (Tschumi, 1995, pp. 52–53).

Lefebvre (1991, p. 143) suggests that:

Activity in space is restricted by that space: space 'decides' what activity may occur, but even this 'decision' has limits placed upon it. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order – and hence also a certain disorder.

In fact, space decides, space lays down the law because it is the very manifestation of dis/order. Space is the primary frame in which mental and physical activities take place. The organisation of space and, more generally, the focus on structure, could be a task for a management that is more and the more confronted by the notion that it produces the problems it promises to

solve. Instead of hoping that the forces of self-organisation might invisibly resolve all problems, we suggest that management should focus on the concrete spatial preconditions that first enable creativity and innovation. In fact, management becomes the support unit for the strategically thinking and acting machine the entire organisation should be. To be an effective manager – to have a strategy – first requires constructing and using what one could term an ‘anthropology of space’ in which architecture might meet and mingle with management.

Weber analysed the irony of those first men (and women) of modernity who sought profit not in the here and now but in everlasting salvation and whose fate would turn out to be that they had remade the world, rationally, as a space fit for those without religious irony, without religious vocation. The irony resided in their having remade the world rationally as something that could so readily become a disenchanted space. By mastering time, by minimising its waste, they created the spaces of modernity – the familiar list of institutionalised rationalities. Today, these rationalities take on the appearance of a litany with many levels, at the apex of which is strategy. To present, strategy has been largely conceived of as something occurring in the most refined and distant corporate spaces: our argument consists of a rationale (*sic!*) as to why this physical isolation, spatial separation and singular seclusion should be opened up to many voices. Strategy requires democratisation and deconstruction in order to open the door to innovation and positive power: the mechanism for this is the creation of new strategic spaces open to new flows, new traffic, and new voices, rather than their sequestration in corporate eyries. To change strategies, first change the spaces within which they are created.

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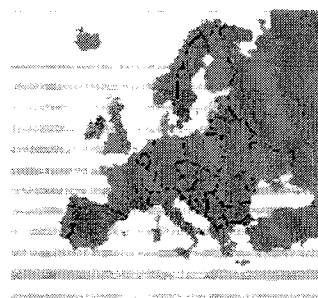
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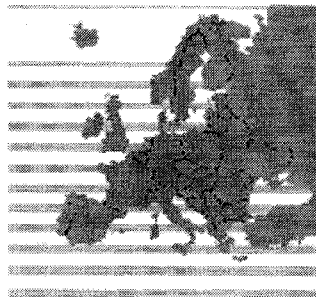
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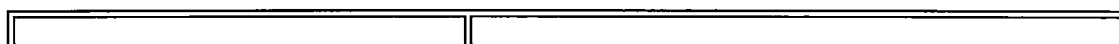
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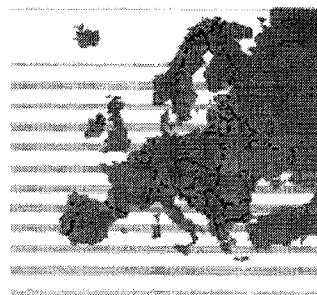
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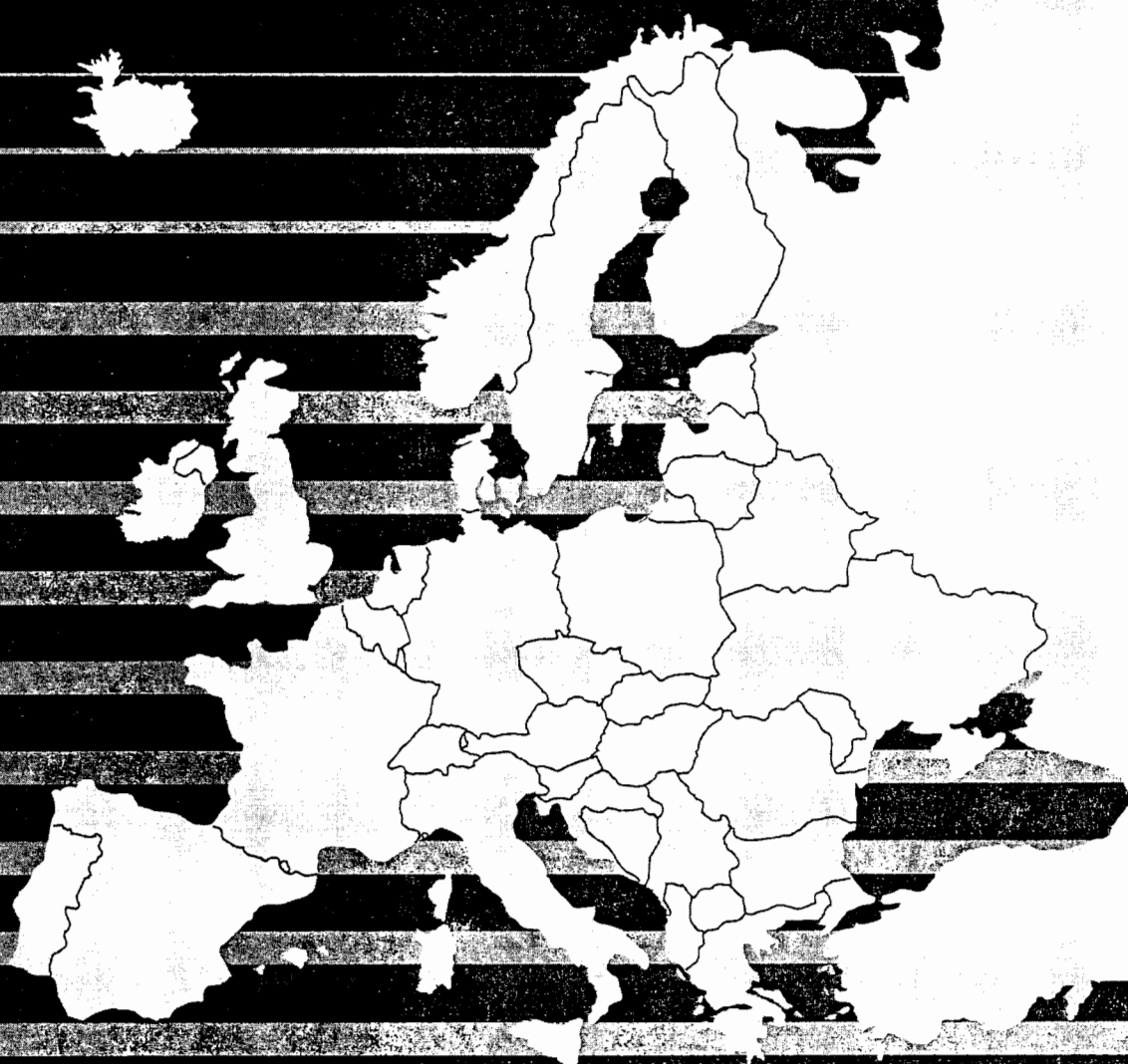
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Subscription rate per annum for one volume (2 issues) in 2003 is £ 25/US\$ 40. Single issues £ 16/US\$ 25.

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Nakład 355 egz. Ark. druk. 9,625  
Zam. 114/3531/2003  
Przyjęto do Wydawnictwa UL 30.05.2003 r.  
Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego  
90-236 Łódź, ul. Pomorska 143

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